

NEW PUBLICATIONS.

VAMBERY'S TRAVELS.

TRAVELS IN CENTRAL ASIA. BY ARNOLD VAMBERY.

The four which furnished the materials for this

interesting volume was undertaken with a view to certain special researches in philology, although the narrative in its present form is devoted to the illustration of the manners and customs of a region remote from the usual courses of travel, and but little known to European geographers. The author, who is a Hungarian by birth, had long cherished a passion for the study of linguistic affinities, with reference especially to certain languages of Europe and Asia; and for the sake of pursuing his favorite inquiries he assumed the disguise of an effendi, or eastern dervish, and in this capacity, accomplished an extensive tour in Central Asia. He had already resided several years in Turkey, and was familiar with Mahometan schools and libraries; this enabled him to carry his bold and somewhat perilous design into effect with remarkable success; and the result of his wanderings is here presented in a series of brilliant sketches, depicting the social and personal usages of the strange races with which he came in contact. The present volume, accordingly, is of an entirely popular character, the author reserving the fruits of his philological labors for publication at some future day in another form.

Joining a caravan of Tartar dervishes, the author started from Teheran about the end of March, 1833, and at once set his face toward the distant East. His first picture of Central Asiatic life presents some striking features. This was at the encampment of Gomushtep, in form like a hundred beehives lying close together, which was reached by the caravan, after several days' hard travel by land and water. The report of their arrival had spread like wild-fire, and produced the greatest commotion. The number of the pilgrims was greatly exaggerated. Men, women, and dogs all hastened in dire confusion out of the tents to gaze upon the strange visitors. The author was at a loss to decide whether he should first pause to admire the singular construction of the tents, formed of felt, and the women with their silken shifts reaching down to the ankles, or at once gratify the wish implied by their outstretched hands and arms. Young and old without distinction of sex or family, all desired to touch the sacred hadjis on whom still rested the dust of Mecca and Medina. To his utter amazement, women of the greatest beauty, some young girls even, hurried up to embrace the fictitious dervish. He was both wearied and dumb-founded with such demonstrations of religion and hospitality. On coming before the tent of the chief priest, a new crowd arose as to who should have the honor of entertaining the venerable guests. At length they were quartered in different tents; but instead of repose, our traveler found himself besieged by visitors, who lingered till a late hour at night, asking a thousand questions until the serene patience was completely exhausted. The supper was served by the son of one of the chief men, a lad twelve years old. It consisted of boiled fish and sour milk in a large wooden dish. The appetite with which it was attacked gave visible pleasure to the hospitable entertainers.

The whole company of pilgrims were constantly invited to religious banquets, which were an almost intolerable bore to our effendi. On such occasions, the host would throw down before the tent some pieces of felt, or if he were in particularly sumptuous mood, of carpet upon which the guests would seat themselves in groups of five or six in a circle, each group receiving a large wooden dish of size and contents adapted to the number and ages of those who were to share it. Every guest plunged his half opened fist into this dish, until he touched bottom. Horse-dish and camel-dish were prominent viands on the Tartar table, while other substitutes for venison are passed over in discreet silence.

During the visit of the caravan, the son of the chief—twelve years old, as before mentioned—was betrothed to a little damsel two years younger than himself. The affair was celebrated by a grand festival. During the banquet, the young lady was completely occupied in working a shawl. Her manner showed a perfect unconsciousness of the presence of others; nor did she betray thought of the whole repeat, which lasted two hours, the slightest interest in the company.

After leaving this hospitable sojourn, the caravan penetrates further and further the untrodden wilds of Central Asia, until they reached the sandy desert on the route to Bokhara. Here they were doomed to encounter the most dismal terrors. It was the month of July. The first station brought them to a sea of sand, extending as far as eye can reach. On one side, it was formed into high hills, like waves lashed into that position by the storm. On the other side, it was like the smooth waters of a still lake, scarcely rippled by the western wind. The camels and asses sank to their knees at every step. Not a bird was visible in the air; not a worm or beetle upon the earth. The bones of those who had perished on the way, whitening in the sun as they lay collected in heaps to guide the march of future travelers formed a somber memorial of departed life. The strength of the camels had been exhausted before they entered the desert; they fell flung through the torments of the sand and heat; and two of them died at the first day's station. The terrible heat had already led the travelers without strength; two of the poorer members of the company, who had tramped on foot by the side of their feeble beasts, became so sick, that they were unable to sit or ride, and had to be bound at full length upon the camels. As long as they were able to articulate, they kept exclaiming: "Water! water!" the only words that escaped their lips. On the fourth day, one of them was relieved by death from the torments of thirst. Before he drew his last breath, his tongue was quite black, the roof of his mouth of a grayish white, his lips shriveled, and the teeth exposed. Before leaving the desert, the author had only about six glasses of water left in his leather bottle. These he drank drop by drop to appease the burning heat. Presently his drooping began to turn black, and alarmed at the danger, he drank off half the remaining store at a draught, thinking thus to save his life. But it only increased the fever in his veins. His strength was gradually leaving him, when the caravan was struck by the lebbad, a poisonous wind of the desert, which had hurried rapidly toward them with death in its approach. The camels, from whom they lost no time in dismounting, uttered a loud cry, fell on their knees, stretched their long necks along the ground, and strove to bury their heads in the sand. The wind rushed by with a dull, clattering sound, leaving the party covered with a crust of sand two fingers thick. The first particles that touched the body seemed to burn like a rain of flakes of fire. Had they met the wild six miles deeper in the desert, the whole caravan would doubtless have perished. The author was left half-dead. He could not stand up from his camel without assistance. As he was laid full length upon the ground, a fearful fire seemed to consume his interior; he was driven almost to madness by the pain in his head; he was apparently suffering the agonies of a horrid death. Starting toward midnight on the perilous

march, he fell asleep, and on awaking in the morning, he found himself in a mud hut, surrounded by people with long beards. He had no strength to speak to them, but they kindly entreated him, gave him something warm to drink, and afterward some sour milk, mixed with water and salt, which soon set him once more upon his feet.

Upon arriving at Bokhara, the capital of Central Asia, he was lodged in a spacious tekke, one of the great religious establishments of Islamism. It was planted with fine trees, formed a regular square, and had forty-eight cells on the ground floor. The stranger was received with the most gracious courtesy by the "abbot," a man of gentle demeanor and agreeable aspect, with a snow-white turban and a summer dress of fine silk. His guest was invited to a cell in a most honorable quarter. His neighbors were persons of learning and celebrity. The morning after his arrival, he was taken out to see the city and the bazaars. The streets and houses were of a wretched description, compared with those of the Persian cities. The dust was a finger deep. But the strange mingling of races, dresses, and customs, presented a curious spectacle to the eye of a stranger. The waving crowd was mostly of the Persian type. Next you see traces of the Tartar physiognomy. In the midst of these leading Asiatic races, you find some Hindoos, and Jews. Both wear a Polish cap, and a cord around their loins. The former with his red mark on his forehead, and his yellow skin, presents a repulsive aspect; the latter, with his noble and handsome features, and his splendid eye, is a model of manly beauty. There were also a few Turkomans, distinguished by the superior boldness and fire of their glance. Of Afghans, there was here and there a specimen.

The bazaar gave no signs of the bustling life which marks such places in Persia. The booths contained fancy goods and merchandise, more especially of Russian manufacture, with a few articles from the other countries of Europe. There are very few large warehouses or wholesale dealers. Calicoes from Manchester and hardware from Birmingham regale the eye of the English traveler. The products of Asiatic soil and industry challenge the attention of the intelligent stranger. Among these, he will notice a peculiar cotton fabric, with narrow stripes of two colors, and a fine texture, various kinds of silken work from handkerchiefs fine as the spider's web to materials for substantial dresses, and particularly, manufactures of leather. The skill of the Oriental shoemakers is remarkable. Ready-made clothing of brilliant colors and fancy designs is exposed to tempt the eye of purchasers. The Asiatic dandy takes a noble pride in the rustling of his dress. After a new purchase, he parades up and down in the precious garment in order to ascertain whether it gives out the true orthodox tone. Everything is the produce of home manufacture and very cheap. The disciples of the true faith, accordingly, even from the remotest parts of Tartary frequent the market of Bokhara for the purchase of fashionable attire. Even the Kirghis, Kiptchaks, and Kalmaks make excursions from the desert for this purpose. The wild Tartar, with his eyes oblique and chin prominent, laughs for joy when he exchanges his suit of undressed horse-skins for a gay summer dress. It is here that he sees his highest ideal of civilization. Bokhara is his Paris or his London.

The author excited a no less intense curiosity among the people in the streets than would a full-blown Bokharist in Wall-street or Broadway. In spite of his costume, which was in accordance with the strictest Oriental etiquette, and of his being constantly surrounded by a crowd of inquisitive persons, who almost wearied him to death by their assiduous attentions. They had full confidence in the reality of the character which he had assumed, and were importunate to obtain the blessing of so sacred a personage. But it was not so easy to play his part to the satisfaction of the Government. He was from the first an object of suspicion. He was incessantly dogged by secret spies. They were on the alert to entrap him in his talk, but he proved too wily for their maneuvers. At length, they ceased to persecute him, and he was permitted to lead a quiet life in Bokhara. He managed his cards so well, that he came to enjoy all the privileges of the city without molestation. It was his habit of all to fulfill at home the different duties belonging to the function of a dervish. He would then proceed to the book bazaar, which contained twenty-five shops. He there found many treasures of incalculable value to Oriental scholars. He was obliged, however, to conceal his interest in them, as any appearance of secular knowledge would have interfered with his disguise. From the bazaar, our untutored dervish would find his way to the public square, the tea-booths, the markets, and other places of public resort in the city. He sometimes received invitations to the house of a Chinese Tartar who had settled in the city. Here he made his first acquaintance with some remarkable national dishes, one of which he recommends in confidence to his readers as a rare dainty. It is a sort of pudding filled with hashed meat mixed with fat and spices, and boiled by a curious arrangement of steam. But all earthly delights must come to an end, and accordingly after a residence of nearly a month, the pilgrim leaves Bokhara with all its temptations, and takes up his line of march to still more remote localities in the heart of Asia.

The volume is written in easy, flowing English, always animated in its style, and often picturesque. It abounds in novel information, presenting the most complete and graphic account of the people of Central Asia which has as yet been given in any single work in our language.

THE ILIAD OF HOMER, RENDERED INTO ENGLISH BLANK VERSE. BY EDWARD EARL OF DERBY. 2 vols. New York, Charles Scribner & Co.

The earliest English translation of Homer was by the quaint old English poet, George Chapman, which was published at intervals between the years 1598 and 1603. This has always been a favorite, especially with poets, and has not lost its popularity with serious readers to the present day. Without a strict adherence to the letter of the original, its language is bold and animated, filled with a fiery spirit, and abounding with vigorous and impressive imagery. At a later date, the Iliad and Odyssey were both translated by the famous philosopher of Malmesbury, Thomas Hobbes, who loved to beguile the dryness of abstract speculation by occasional excursions in the field of poetry. His version was published in 1633, and passed through three editions in less than ten years, although it is now scarcely known except to a few zealous lovers of antiquarian studies. By far the most popular translation of Homer is that of Pope, although its elaborate, artificial diction, perpetually infected with "glittering generalities" and superfluous epithets, conveys but a faint idea of the pregnant brevity and simple grandeur of the original. This was published in 1715-16, and has since maintained its place as a standard work in English literature, in spite of Dr. Bentley's compliment to the author, "It is a pretty poem, Mr. Pope; but you must not call it Homer." Cowper's translation in blank verse, published in 1791, is a work of masterly strength, rugged to a fault in expression, but

forcibly representing the language and the tone of the original. A more recent translation by the English poet Sotheby possesses comparatively little merit, while a version by an American scholar, William Munford, of Richmond, Va., was pronounced by the late President Felton to be the best in the language.

The present translation by Earl Derby makes a near approach to fulfilling the conditions of an admirable version. It is founded on a familiar and critical knowledge of the Greek language; it reproduces the very spirit of antiquity; it indulges in no capricious or arbitrary licenses of expression; without aiming at paraphrase, it transforms the original into idiomatic English; preserving, with remarkable fidelity, the peculiar turn of phrase and characteristic imagery which give the Iliad such an unrivaled preeminence among descriptive poems.

A good illustration of Earl Derby's method and power of execution as compared with previous translations, may be found in the familiar episode of the parting of Hector and Andromache.

So spoke the ancient dame; and Hector straight
Through the wide streets his rapid steps retraced.
But when at last the mighty city's length
Was traversed, and the gates of Troy were reached,
He found the outlet to the plain, in haste
Running to meet him came his priceless wife,
Etion's daughter, fair Andromache.
Etion, who from Thebes Iliac sway'd,
Gave her to Hector, when his arms were bright.
His child to Hector of the brazen helm
Was given in marriage; she it was who now
Met him, and by her side the nurse, who bore
Clasp'd to her breast, his all-uncertain child,
Hector's loved life, his fair as Archer's arrow,
Whom Hector called Scamandrius, but the rest
Aetynax, in honor of his sire,
The matchless chief, the only prince of Troy.
Silent he smil'd as on his boy he said:
But at his side Andromache, in tears,
Hung on his arm, and thus the chief address'd:
"Dear Lord, thy daughter's spirit will work thy doom:
Nor hast thou put on this thy helpless child,
Nor forsooth, to be thy widow soon:
For thou wilt all the Greeks with force combin'd
Assail and slay; for me, I trow, better far,
Of thee bereft, to lie beneath the soil,
Nor comfort shall be mine, if thou be lost,
But endless grief, to me no more is left.
Nor honor'd mother, for Achilles' hand,
My dear son slew; that time his arms
The populous city of Cilicia raz'd.
The lofty gates of Thebes, he slew indeed,
But tripp'd him not; he reverend to the dead;
Whence he further home, he struck us down,
A mound erected, and the mountain nymphs,
The progeny of ægis-bearing Jove,
Planted around his tomb a grove of elms.
There were seven brethren in my father's house;
All in one day they fell, as he did here,
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The lofty gates of Thebes, he slew indeed,
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